

Christ Church
Near Laurel, Sussex County, Delaware.

HABS No. Del-8

HABS
DEL.

Delaware

1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Delaware

Historic American Buildings Survey
Weston H. Blake, District Officer
1301 Market Street, Wilmington, Del.

HABS
DEL.

3-LAU.V

1-

OLD CHRIST CHURCH
Near Laurel - Sussex County - Delaware.

Owner: Parish of St. Philips of Laurel,
Episcopal Diocese of Delaware.

Date of Erection: 1771

Architect: Not Known

Builder: Robert Holston

Present Condition: Fair, but is fire hazard.
Is situated on Broad Creek in a wooded section
about two miles east of Laurel.

Number of Stories: One, with small Servant's
Gallery at North End.

Materials of Construction: Brick foundations,
exterior and interior walls of heart pine, flush
beveled joint boards about $6\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. Fine pan-
elled pews, ohancel and pulpit all of pine.
With exception of window sash, has never been
painted. Wood shingle roof.

Other Existing Records: Scharf's History of
Delaware. P. 1329.

The Diocese of Delaware, Its Historioal, Parish
and Mission churches by Rev. W. F. Bumstead.
Some Historical Points in Delaware, The National
Society of Colonial Dames.

Additional Data: Originally a Chapel of Ease
to Stepney Parish, Green Hill Maryland.
At time of erection in 1771 was said to have
cost 510.00 pounds.


District Officer

Reviewed July 8, 1936 T.H.W.

CHRIST CHURCH

An addendum to
Christ Church
Laurel Vicinity, Delaware
in HABS Catalog (1941)

HABS
DEL
3-LAU V.
1-

Location: Two miles east of Laurel, Broad Creek Hundred,
Laurel Vicinity, Sussex County, Delaware

Brief Statement
of Significance: This late eighteenth-century building is an attractive example of a provincial adaptation in wood of prevailing ecclesiastical building tradition.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Christ Church, Broad Creek Hundred, was built in 1770 (finished 1772) as a chapel-of-ease of Stepney Parish in Maryland. Before the Revolutionary War, all the Church of England parishes in the American Colonies were part of the Diocese of London. When a parish had such wide-extended territorial boundaries that many of the members found it difficult--at times well-nigh impossible--to attend the parish church, it was not unusual to build a chapel-of-ease in a neighborhood to accommodate the more distant parishioners. The chapel-of-ease continued under the same Rector as the parish church. The land whereon Christ Church, Broad Creek, now stands was claimed by Maryland until 1775.

This church in the northern part of Stepney Parish was closely patterned after the mother church at Green Hill. The chief difference is that the Stepney church is built of brick, while Christ Church is built of wood, and so well built of fine-grained, resinous heart-of-pine planks that it is still in sound and excellent condition.

Only the white window sashes are painted. The rest of the structure has weathered to the rich golden brown of old pine needles. The interior also is entirely unpainted save for the white window sashes.

All the pews are of the high-backed, square box type with doors. Backs, doors, and sides of the pews are all paneled. The wooden ceiling is a slightly flattened barrel vault.

Altogether, the church as it stands today is a striking example of eighteenth-century native workmanship successfully adapting Georgian ecclesiastical tradition and precedent to a worthy expression in wood, the prevalent and only available building material of the region.